

address where your spouse sleeps at night?" and to top it all off, taxpayer money was used again to produce and mail this intrusive questionnaire.

The response on Capitol Hill has been overwhelming. On January 6, Senators GRAMM and HUTCHINSON and Representative BONILLA wrote to Attorney General Janet Reno and asked her to intervene on behalf of the military voters. The Department of Justice answered that they cannot act on this until a judgment is rendered. The Senators also received the Legal Service's chairman to investigate the lawsuit and cut off all Federal funds.

On February 5, Senators GRAMM and HUTCHINSON introduced the Military Voting Rights Act of 1997. This bill will guarantee the right of all active military personnel, Merchant Marine, and dependents to vote in Federal, State, and local elections. This same bill has been introduced in the House by HENRY BONILLA and myself. We are fighting the battle here in Washington, and others are on the frontlines in Texas. A united front will stop this kind of reckless activism from encroaching on the rights of all Americans.

I think this ridiculous lawsuit is a blatant challenge to the military's right to vote and sets a dangerous precedent for the denial of basic rights, the power of judges to interfere with valid election results. It used to be standard practice to impeach judges who nullify elections. Maybe it ought to be again.

VOTE AGAINST HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 58 TO DECERTIFY MEXICO

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from Texas [Mr. REYES] is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. REYES. Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to urge my colleagues to support the President's decision to certify Mexico and vote against House Joint Resolution 58 to decertify Mexico.

Mr. Speaker, this is an issue that I know something about. Before being elected to Congress, I spent more than 26 years as a member of the U.S. Border Patrol enforcing this Nation's interdiction laws. I have personally observed Mexico's commitment to stem the tide of drug trafficking and have witnessed its strong cross-border drug interdiction efforts. I have been on the front lines in the so-called war on drugs, and I am here today to tell my colleagues that this resolution to decertify Mexico may be only symbolic to us, but it has with it some serious implications and consequences to those of us that live along the border, and I do not mean just people that live exclusively in Mexico.

We have developed a spirit of cooperation with Mexico in many areas: trade, environment, immigration, as well as drug interdiction. Our economies are interdependent along the bor-

der. In fact, more than 280 million people passed back and forth between Mexico and the United States during fiscal year 1996.

A vote to decertify Mexico would greatly jeopardize the spirit of cooperation we have developed with Mexico. In addition, the threat of decertification causes the peso to plunge, as we saw late last month, which not only has an adverse effect on the Mexican economy, but can also increase the pressures on our border communities and has the potential to increase illegal immigration.

Drug trafficking is not just a Mexican problem or issue. We on the northern side of the border must do more to stem the demand for illicit drugs. The good news is that the number of people using drugs last month declined. The bad news is an estimated 12.8 million Americans, or about 6 percent of the household population aged 12 and older, have used illicit drugs within the past 30 days.

Illegal drugs are readily available almost anywhere in the United States. We have not done enough to deter drug use among our Nation's children and in our Nation's neighborhoods. Illegal drug trafficking is not just a Mexican problem, it is our problem, and we must do more to reduce drug use and not just point fingers at our neighbor to the south.

Mexico has taken a number of steps in the last year to strengthen its efforts to fight the spread of illegal drugs, and they have done so by aggressively fighting corruption, they have done so by overhauling Federal agencies and recruiting qualified personnel. They have done so by strengthening counter-drug cooperation with the United States, and they have done so by improving their extradition policy. All of these things produce positive results in Mexico's fight on drugs.

The Republic of Mexico has been certified since 1986, and, moreover, the historical relationship between Mexico and the United States has been one of increasing cooperation and furtherance of mutual interests. Over the past 10 years our southern neighbor has cooperated with our efforts to stem drug trafficking while at the same time dealing with severe economic, political, and serious trade developments.

Mr. Speaker, if we want to address the basic problems surrounding the certification process, then let us do that. If we are serious about our efforts to combat drug abuse, then we need to do better on our side of the border. But this resolution does not resolve anything. It does not do anything to take drug dealers off the street, it does not do anything to help law enforcement agencies on our border, and it does not do anything to promote good will and understanding with our neighbors in Mexico. It only strains our relationship with our neighbor, and it is very counterproductive.

When all is said and done, Mr. Speaker, more is said than actually done. I

urge all of my colleagues to refrain from political posturing in the name of fighting drug trafficking and to oppose this resolution.

OPPOSE HASTY ACTION ON REVISING THE CONSUMER PRICE INDEX

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. SAXTON] is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. SAXTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to express my strong opposition to hasty action on the issue of revising the Consumer Price Index to adjust Federal income tax and benefit programs. Congress should closely examine the technical issues involving the Consumer Price Index until it has all the information needed to make policy changes in this area. A trillion dollars in tax increases and benefit restraints in programs like Social Security would affect too many millions of people to make decisions on the basis of incomplete information.

After all, it took a panel of five professional economists 2 years to sort out these issues in producing a report, which is known as the Boskin report, which came out last December. Members of Congress need to carefully consider the main issues in this report and judge for themselves whether its recommendations for congressional action are warranted or not.

The Consumer Price Index is produced by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the same agency that generates employment and unemployment figures. The CPI is a fairly old statistic, and a committee headed by George Stigler reported to the JEC in 1961 its finding on issues related to this index involving product substitution, product quality changes, updating market baskets, treatment of new products, and a number of other issues. More recently, the Boskin Commission report reviewed many of these same issues, and this report has sparked considerable controversy.

I think it is fair to say that although there is consensus that the CPI may be overstating inflation, the extent of the overstatement is very debatable and questionable. It is also worthwhile to note that Congress, rightly or wrongly, choose to index a variety of Federal benefits and tax provisions after the Stigler committee issued its report in 1961. There would seem to be ample reason for Congress to examine these issues carefully before making hasty policy decisions.

□ 1300

Now, as I have pointed out, the policy decisions made regarding the CPI would affect millions of Americans. According to a recent Joint Economic Committee analysis, about 40 percent of the direct effects of legislative reductions to the CPI would comprise tax

increases. That is, taxes would go up if the CPI is adjusted downward, and that would of course be primarily on middle class taxpayers, with tax increases averaging over \$400 per year by the year 2008, and the remainder of the adjustments would fall on entitlement beneficiaries like Social Security recipients who would get lower annual cost-of-living adjustments. Congress should consider whether this mix of policy for deficit reduction achieves the desired results in the best way.

To date, the debate has been framed by the Boskin Commission report, but additional information and analysis is needed for balanced decisionmaking on this complicated issue. For this reason I have requested an indepth Bureau of Labor Statistics study of the technical issues raised by the Boskin Commission.

It is my hope that the BLS will complete its investigation and report this summer. In fairness to the many millions of Americans that could be affected by these policy changes, I would hope that Congress would receive and digest the forthcoming BLS study before hasty actions are taken. Though the BLS is certainly not above criticism and perhaps should have acted more strongly in this area heretofore, more than one perspective is needed, and the BLS can provide that perspective for sound policymaking with respect to the CPI.

Mr. Speaker, the American people have seen enough tax increases, and they are entitled to know that Social Security cost-of-living adjustments will be safe. They do not need these programs tampered with through the back-door adjustment of the CPI.

OUR CHILDREN MUST BE OUR PRIORITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. EHLERS). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. McGOVERN] is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. McGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, this Thursday, House Democrats will introduce one of the major planks of the families first agenda: the Children's Health Care Act.

Mr. Speaker, one child in seven living in the United States is without health insurance. That is about 10 million uninsured kids. This statistic is not really startling, it is simply unacceptable. It is unacceptable for a nation as wealthy and as powerful as ours to be denying our kids the health coverage that they need and that they deserve.

Mr. Speaker, I did not have to look very far to see firsthand evidence of this national crisis. Just 2 years ago in my home State of Massachusetts, 23 percent of children under the age of 18, or some 160,000 kids, were without even basic health insurance. And it does not take a pediatrician to understand what this meant for Massachusetts. Unin-

sured children are at risk of contracting preventable illnesses, illnesses that cost far more to treat than they do to prevent. Millions of kids without insurance means millions of kids without a secure future and millions of dreams deferred.

Families with uninsured kids do not want their children to be vulnerable, but they live from month to month and paycheck to paycheck with little money in the family budget to spare. These families are hard-working families, forced by their economic position to choose between paying for things like food and rent, hot water and electricity, and paying for things like prescriptions or doctor visits for their kids.

So what happens when a child's health needs are deferred? Well, their families pay dearly. For example, one-third of uninsured children with recurring ear infections never see a doctor. Many suffer hearing loss that is permanent and, what is worse, was preventable.

But the health care crisis goes beyond health and money; it affects our children's very capacity to learn and to grow. When I was a little kid, I remember having trouble learning in school. I was getting terrible headaches all the time and I had a lot of trouble concentrating. I remember vividly the day that my parents took me to the doctor to get my eyesight checked. As it turned out, I was getting headaches because I could not see the blackboard, and there was a simple solution: I needed eyeglasses.

Now, I would be lying if I said I was really excited about the prospect of getting eyeglasses as a kid. But as I was able to read what the teacher wrote on the board and as my headaches began to disappear and as my concentration began to improve, I was so inspired that I told my parents I wanted to grow up to be an eye doctor. To be frank, my mother still thinks that I should have become an eye doctor rather than the career path that I chose. But I learned a valuable lesson from that firsthand experience, and that is keeping our kids healthy is the best way to secure their future.

Now, my own State of Massachusetts has seen some very positive changes concerning health care in the past few years. Massachusetts worked hard to craft a bill called An Act to Improve Health Care Access. Now the law of the Commonwealth, this landmark piece of legislation is on the verge of giving basic coverage to some 125,000 kids in Massachusetts. That is 80 percent of the uninsured children in the State of Massachusetts.

So how was something like this financed? Well, Massachusetts has found the funds to undertake this bold plan in two areas. First, administrators found savings by streamlining and fine-tuning the way these programs are managed. Second, Massachusetts implemented a 25-cent-per-pack cigarette tax, a move that made my home State

eligible for more Federal funding. Massachusetts is watching that revenue do what every State in the Nation should do, and that is cover children's health care.

Mr. Speaker, we must understand that it is in the best interests of our country to recognize and provide for children in need. As Members of Congress, we would not send troops into battle knowing that one-seventh of their equipment was faulty. As Government officials, we would not agree to build bridges if 1 in 7 fell to the ground. And as parents, we would never send our children to schools in which 1 student in 7 did not see a teacher.

Massachusetts should serve as an inspiration for the rest of our Nation. Mr. Speaker, it is a national scandal that 40 million Americans are without health insurance in this country, but it is absolutely unconscionable that nearly 10 million kids find themselves without proper health care. Every Member of this body earns an enormous salary and enjoys a first-rate health care plan. Why should our children deserve any less?

Now, I have no illusions about our present political environment. I understand that this Republican Congress is nowhere near heeding the call for universal health care coverage. But while we cannot cover everyone yet, we must do what we can today. So let us make sure that our kids are covered. As Members of Congress, we have a responsibility to prepare our children to be leaders tomorrow by insuring that they receive a healthy start today. Our children deserve no less.

OUR CHILDREN NEED OUR HELP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from Georgia [Mr. LEWIS] is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I am dismayed that in our great country, there are children who do not have health insurance. There are 10 million children. That is not right. That is not fair. That does not make sense.

Our country is too rich, too powerful, too strong to have children without health insurance. We cannot call ourselves truly great when we do not provide for our most vulnerable and most precious, our children.

This is a problem that we can fix and we must fix. As a nation we made a commitment to educate our children. We do this because it is good for them and it is good for all of us. Now we must make another commitment. It is time to keep all of our children healthy. Each and every child, rich and poor, black and white, in the big cities to the suburbs of rural America. Each and every child should be able to see a doctor, to get medicine when they are sick, to have medical care when they need help. A sick child cannot go to school, cannot learn. A sick child cannot build for the future. A healthy child can study, work, and dream.